

"History of Midway Education" from "Under Wasatch Skies"

CHAPTER III

LATER VALLEY SETTLEMENTS

The early settlers who came to Provo Valley were interested in establishing homes and gaining their livelihood from agriculture. In this semi-arid region they were forced to depend largely upon irrigation to make the land productive. Those who moved in from other sections of the state were already familiar with this system of getting water to the land, and those who were new were soon impressed with its necessity. A brief reference to the map of the area shows the pioneer settlements strung along the river and streams like ornaments on a tree. It would not be an overstatement to say that in the beginning the size of the settlement was almost directly proportional to the amount of accessible irrigation water. The importance of irrigation and the way in which the pioneers cooperated to obtain the necessary water is the subject of a later chapter. Suffice it here to say that the availability of irrigation water was the determining factor in the selection of sites for pioneer settlement in Wasatch County.

Later in the County's history a number of other factors gave rise to settlements and impetus to the growth of those already established. The growth of Keetley can only be explained in terms of successful mining, and work in railroad shops meant much to Soldier's Summit. We have considered the settlement of Heber previously. How and why the other towns and cities of the County grew is the subject of this chapter.

MIDWAY

Provo Valley is roughly divided into an eastern and western half by the river that runs through it. On either side of the river a number of large streams lattice the

were not long in following, and soon enough families had settled along the creek to establish the nuclei for two communities known as the upper and lower settlements.

The upper settlement was first settled by Peter Shirts, John and Ephraim Hanks, and a Mr. Riggs in 1860.³ It was later named Mound City because of the numerous limestone formations in the region. A number of hot water springs flow from the bench land around upper Snake Creek, and over a period of many years they have deposited limestone sufficient to form a crust several inches thick on much of the surrounding land. The springs have also built up a number of good-sized limestone mounds at the point where they flow from the ground. The enterprising people in the valley cleared much of the porous limestone, known as pot rock, from the ground in order to farm. It was then piled up for fences or shaped for building material and many prominent and substantial buildings were made from it. The hot water in turn provided the basis for commercial warm water swimming activities and health resorts.

The growth of the upper and lower settlements required some sort of organization to coordinate the activity of the various families. In both places, as in other Latter-day Saint pioneer communities too small for organization into a ward, this was supplied originally by a presiding elder of the Church who, when sustained by the Church members, exercised political, judicial, military, and religious authority. In 1862 Sidney Epperson was appointed presiding elder over the upper settlement with John Fausett and Samuel Thompson as his counselors. By 1864 the lower settlement included some twenty families, and David Van Wagonen was appointed as the presiding elder there.⁴

³Simon Epperson, *Sidney Epperson Pioneer* (Heber, Utah, 1927), p. 20.
⁴*Ibid.*

The settlements continued to grow independently until Indian trouble threatened the settlers in 1866. In their exposed positions all along the creek the families were extremely vulnerable to the type of raid made by the Indians. The Church leaders advised them to join together and build a fort for their mutual protection. Tradition states that the question of the fort's location was a warm issue between the residents of both settlements. Loyal citizens of Mound City were extremely reluctant to leave the obvious virtues of their high surroundings to join the lower settlement, and the equally patriotic stalwarts of the lower settlement were just as naturally inclined to reject the offer to join the upper settlement. Finally, as a result of compromise, they built the fort midway between the two, and thus the present town of Midway got its name and location.

By mid-summer of 1866 seventy-five cabins stood on the fort line.⁵ Some of them were moved from the old settlements. The fort was never attacked, which fact itself is a tribute to the ability of the pioneers to cooperate in overcoming common difficulties.

In 1868 the families began to move out of the fort line into homes on the present Midway townsite, and the old fort line formed the public square for the new town.

CHARLESTON

Early in the history of the county the southern end of Provo Valley was the scene of cattle raising. A year before the great rush of settlement in 1859 ranches such as that of George Bean, Aaron Daniels, and Aaron Decker were spread out along the rich grassland of the Provo River bottoms. With the coming of the first farming settlers, activity in the Charleston region centered about ranching with some raising of grain. George Noaks and

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 45.

CHAPTER VII EDUCATION

An important feature of pioneer life in Wasatch County was the emphasis on education. Often the combination school and meeting house was built before all of the log homes were completed.

Education at first was very rudimentary. An account of the first school in Midway tells of children of all ages sitting into the little one room log school house to sit on the slab benches while Simon Higgenbotham instructed them in reading, writing, and arithmetic.¹ Thirsty students laid down their slates and Wilson readers and ran outside to drink from the ditch nearby.

School buildings rapidly improved so that by 1876 the log schools in the communities were replaced by new ones of stone. The quality of instruction progressed more slowly since there were few teachers with any professional training.

Among the early educators none was more revered than Attewell Wootton. He was born in Turnstall, Staffordshire, England, on December 26, 1839. His parents, as converts to the L. D. S. Church, emigrated to America in the early 1840's. Attewell's early education was derived first from learning to read the Book of Mormon under his mother's supervision and later by attending three terms of Eugene Henroid's school in American Fork.² Recalling the school days, Mr. Henroid remarked: "Attewell was always a studious boy and soon excelled the other pupils. After three terms of school he had so progressed that I could teach him no more so I recom-

mended that he be made a teacher even at his immature age."³

Attewell later married Cynthia Jewett and moved



Edward Ruys

Attewell Wootton

to Midway in 1866, where he began teaching school. By 1887 he was so well known and liked that he was elected superintendent of Wasatch Public Schools and served in that office twenty-five years until his death in 1912.

Education in the county had already grown out of the log cabin stage when Attewell Wootton first came to Midway. School was now held in the new pot rock school house which was carefully whitewashed before each term. The slab seats had been replaced by benches and long desks with shelves underneath to hold school books. A stove at the side of the room and a water bucket with a dipper hanging on a nail driven into the back

¹Holmes, "Interview with Henry Van Wagoner," *op. cit.*, p. 2.
²Florence Wootton Willes, "Attewell Wootton," *Heart Thrills of the West*, ed. by Kate B. Carter, (Salt Lake, 1940) II, 141-2.

³*Ibid.*

wall were among the improvements. There was no exact starting age for the pupils. Both the convenience of the school house and the availability of transportation were



Early Daniels school

important factors in determining when children would begin school. The parents paid a fee for each child in attendance.

By nine in the morning the students of all ages entered the single classroom. Classwork was preceded by a prayer offered by the teacher or one of the older students. Then instruction in the three R's supplemented by spelling and geography began.⁴

Reading was taught beginning with the primer and working up through the fifth reader in the Parker and Watson series. The older children at times assisted the teacher by listening to the younger children recite.

⁴Statement by Emily Coleman, personal interview, 1952.

In geography the pupils received "a view of the present state of the world," according to the sub-title to *Olney's School Geography*. They learned among other items "how Italy is bounded," "the features of the European, Asiatic, Malayan, African and Indian Races," and "how society is organized."

They struggled with addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and denominate numbers during the arithmetic period.

Spelling from Bancroft's *Pacific Coast Series* placed emphasis on articulation and inflection. Each Friday the older students participated in a spelling contest while the younger children watched.⁵

Announcement of the morning and afternoon recess periods saw children rushing pell-mell outside to join their friends in such games as tag, steal-the-stick, and drop-the-handkerchief.

This description of the Midway school is true in general of all Wasatch County schools in the 1870's. Teachers were generally ill paid and often supplemented their meager incomes with other work. Many of the teachers were transient and there were few professional standards. The county had been divided into school districts, but these divisions were not functioning, nor were the schools and teachers supported by general taxation of the people.

The third phase of education saw the establishment of church schools, together with the improvement of the district school system. In Wasatch County the Methodist and Congregational Churches established schools and the Mormon Church began the Wasatch Academy.

Various Christian denominations other than the L. D. S. Church had established schools in Utah in the 1860's. Many of them were part of a mission system

⁵Statement by Lethe Tatge, personal interview, 1952.



Wasatch Stake Academy

Back Row, left to right: 1. William Baird, 2. Charles Ohwiler, 3. John Fortie, 4. Robert Lindsay, 5. William Coleman, 6. Hugh C. Coleman, 7. George Wootton, 8. Alma VanWagonen, 9. William Cummings, 10.Tate

2nd Row: 11. Charles Cluff, 12. Joseph A. Murdock, 13. Frank Murdock, 14. John Bond, 15. David McDonald, 16. Edwin Martin, 17. Charles Rhodes, 18. William T. Wootton, 19. Frederick Hicken, 20. Joseph Lindsay, 21. Frederick Crook, 22. Brigham Murdock, 23. John Wootton, 24. William H. Lindsay

3rd Row: 25. Eva Cluff, 26. Lodema Robertson, 27. Sarah Wing, 28. Mary Baum, 29. Clary Murdock, 30. Lucy Bagley, 31. Orpha Alexander, 32. Violet Ryan, 33. Susie Ryan, 34. Bertha Jorgenson, 35. Matilda Smith, 36. Agnes Turner, 37. Mary Jeffs, 38. Emma Lind, 39. Rachel Emma Hicken, 40. Sarah Giles, 41. Sarah Gilner, 42. Maria Christensen

Between the 3rd and 4th row is the small group:

43. Annie Anderson, 44. Lizzie Moulton, 45. Matilda Allison, 46. Minnie Cummings, 47. Elizabeth Moulton, 48. Nellie Moulton

4th row: 49. Lanie Anderson, 50. Emma Jeffs, 51. Sarah Giles, 52. Jean McMillan, 53. Rhoda Hicken, 54. May Lister, 55. Katie Carr, 56. Effie Jorgenson, 57. Ephraim Dyer, 58. Minnie Lindsay, 59. Florinda Cummings, 60. Lucretia Moulton, 61. Margie Moulton, 62. Jane Wing

5th Row: Enoch Jorgensen, teacher, 64. Roy Murdock, 65. Hyrum Nicol, 66. William C. Lindsay, 67. James L. Lindsay, 68. Joseph Peterson, 69. George Alexander, 70. Orson Moulton, 71. Moroni Moulton, 72. Brigham Young, 73. Henry Moulton, 74. William Moulton, 75. Taylor Goodwin, 76. Charles Hicken, 77. John Nelson, 79. (Miss) Nelson, assistant teacher.

designed to convert the Mormon people." In other cases they were established for the non-Mormon settlers who would not allow their children to attend public schools which were often held in Mormon meeting houses.⁷ In Wasatch County, where there was a scarcity of teachers and schools, these denominational grammar schools were welcomed and were well attended. Latter-day Saint officials helped to find then locations. Mormon children who lived in the vicinity of the schools often attended. The New West Education Commission, one of the societies of the Congregational Church, opened the Heber school in the old rock store built by Judge Carter. Miss Angie L. Steele, the first teacher, soon had forty pupils. She left after the first year and Jennie Clafin, who previously taught at the New West school in Bountiful, took her place. Miss Clafin taught successfully for a year and was succeeded by M. A. Hand.⁸ Later Miss Crossbie, Miss Lester, and Miss Stoner were among the succession of teachers to come to the New West school.

The Methodist Church sponsored a similar school at about the same time. Ella Young was one of the early teachers.⁹

Most of the teachers were young unmarried women from the eastern part of the United States, who came to teach several years and then return home. Many of them were graduates of the finest colleges. In the classes they taught; and in the entertainments and programs which the schools sponsored in connection with the local Congregational and Methodist Churches, these women had a marked influence in introducing western frontier children to a fine sense of culture and refinement.¹⁰

⁷Neff, *op. cit.*, p. 855.

⁸Hunter, *Utah—The Story of Her People*, p. 208.

⁹Wasatch Wave, September 14, 1889.

¹⁰Wasatch Wave, August 19, 1890.

¹¹Wasatch Wave, August 31, 1889.

¹²Wasatch Wave, March 30, 1889.

The Wasatch Stake Academy in Heber was a church institution designed to provide secondary school education together with religious instruction in the doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In July 1888, Stake President Abiram Hatch received a letter from Wilford Woodruff, President of the Church, instructing the Wasatch Stake Presidency to establish a church board of education for the Wasatch Stake of Zion.¹² Eight men representing the wards of the Stake were chosen, and under their direction plans were made to construct a building for the school. But school began long before the building plans were completed. At a meeting of the board on August 22, 1889, Enoch Jorgensen was appointed principal of the Academy. Instruction was to begin on September 9, 1889. The academic year was divided into four terms running from September 9 to June 27. Instruction was to be given in preparatory and an intermediate grade. Mr. Jorgensen taught the intermediate and Miss Nelson was the first teacher of the preparatory, which did not begin until the second term. The school, first held in the back room of the Stake Tabernacle, was open to both male and female students. The circular announcing the commencement of the first term ran in the *Wasatch Wave* and informed those who anticipated attending that the tuition would be four dollars a term paid in advance and that good board and lodging with private families in Heber could be had for two dollars and fifty cents to three dollars a week.¹³

A great variety of subjects were offered to those in the intermediate department. The course in theology consisted of the principles of the gospel, graded and taught systematically from the general church works. Then came reading, grammar, composition, arithmetic, geography, penmanship, orthography, analytical and perspective drawing, bookkeeping, vocal music, U. S.

¹²Wasatch Wave, August 31, 1889.

¹³*Ibid.*

history, algebra, physiology, and ladies' work. One must necessarily marvel at the versatility of Enoch Jorgensen when it is realized that not only was he the principal of the school but that he, assisted by Miss Nelson, taught all these subjects. Lest any student, patterning himself after the principal, should overwork, the rule was made that no pupil could have more than eight studies.

President Woodruff had laid great emphasis on the need for religious education for "religious training is almost excluded from the district schools. The study of books that we value as divine is forbidden."¹¹ In the Wasatch Stake Academy, heavy emphasis was placed on religious education. Students were graded according to age, degree in the priesthood, and previous training in theology. School was opened and closed each day with singing and prayer. There were daily recitations in theology and general theological exercises every Wednesday. Each Monday after school Mr. Jorgensen held a general review of the previous week's theology lessons. Once a week a priesthood meeting of teacher and students convened to acquaint the members more fully with the duties and organization of the priesthood. The circular announced: "The spirit of theology is to be deluded throughout all the other studies."¹²

Exacting moral standards were required of those attending. There was to be no "profanity or obscenity, tobacco or strong drink, no visiting taverns or games of chance."

The first enrollment was gratifying. Thirty-six students had enrolled by the end of the first term, and by February 18 there were 126.

District schools by 1890 were functioning in all the communities. Teachers were still difficult to find, but those interested had to contact Attevall Wootton for certification before they could teach. Schools were as yet

¹¹*Wasatch Wave*, August 31, 1889.

¹²*Ibid.*

supported by tuition. Children who were willing to pay one dollar and fifty cents per term in advance could then get an admit entitling them to attend from the clerk of the board of trustees.¹³

As the year 1900 approached, marking the end of this period in the growth of the county, elementary education was more and more becoming a public responsibility. The growth of the district school system gradually supplanted the denominational schools. Secondary education at this time remained the province of the Wasatch Stake Academy, later to be replaced by the public high school.

¹³*Wasatch Wave*, September 7, 1889.

